



James E. McGreevey
Governor

Susan Bass Levin
Commissioner

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Community Matters

A Newsletter for the Employees of the Department of Community Affairs

PERSPECTIVE

'Customer Service'

by Commissioner Susan Bass Levin

DCA has a diverse mandate and a broad range of responsibilities. Our core mission, however, is to provide assistance to towns and cities.

As a former mayor, I understand the challenges of operating a municipality. I'm aware of the difficult issues that confront local governments on a regular basis.

Now more than ever, New Jersey's mayors need DCA to be a resource for solutions – a place to turn for constructive advice and assistance.

We want DCA to be viewed as a friend, and we will be reviewing our operations to ensure that the department best serves that role.

We have an opportunity to examine our approaches and work to be as creative, responsive and efficient as possible.

We can help our communities by building bridges between programs throughout our department and throughout state government. We can work to simplify and coordinate our assistance and make it more inviting and user-friendly.

We have a chance to take a fresh look at the way we do business and the way we meet the needs of our customers.

We're partners with local governments in serving the people of New Jersey. Working together, we can take great strides in improving the quality of life in our state.

Governor Establishes Smart Growth Council

DCA Creating Smart Growth Office

Signaling a major emphasis on sound and coordinated planning in New Jersey, Governor James E. McGreevey has established a Smart Growth Policy Council comprised of Cabinet members and senior administration officials.

The policy council will be helped, in large part, by a smart growth office being established at DCA.

"The Smart Growth Policy Council will be an important element of our efforts to improve the quality of life within our state," Gov. McGreevey said. "To grow smart, we need to break down the barriers that separate the various state agencies that play a role in how New Jersey develops. The council will improve communication and ensure that we work together to rebuild our towns, reduce congestion and preserve open space."

The council will include the commissioners of DCA, Education, Environmental Protection and Transportation, the Secretary of Agriculture, the president of the Board of Public Utilities, the Treasurer, the chief executive officer of the Commerce and Economic Growth Commission, the executive directors of NJ Transit and the Economic Development Authority, and the chief of the Authorities Unit in the Governor's Office. A

senior policy advisor from the Governor's staff will chair the panel.

The Governor, who signed Executive Order 4 creating the council, said the panel will ensure that all state agencies incorporate the principles of smart growth and the State Plan into their policies and regulations. Smart Growth Impact Statements will be required prior to the adoption, amendment or repeal of regulations related to smart growth and the State Plan.

The Executive Order also authorizes the Attorney General to intervene on behalf of local governments in cases of statewide significance involving smart growth or the integrity of the State Plan.

The smart growth office at DCA, meanwhile, is part of a reorganization to ensure the highest level of efficiency as the State Plan moves from paper to practice. It will provide a support team that is best able to work with local governments and state agencies to advance the goals of smart growth.

The office will be located on the 7th Floor of the DCA building. It will work hand-in-hand with the Smart Growth Policy Council and the state Planning Commission.

Abraham Antun Named Deputy Commissioner

Abraham Antun of Union City, Hudson County's administrator for the past four years, has been named Deputy Commissioner at DCA. His first day at DCA was Monday.

Antun, who also served as the county's Director of Finance and Administration and Treasurer, is serving as a key advisor to DCA Commissioner Susan Bass Levin.

"We are pleased to have someone with Abe's strong background in local government and financial affairs to serve in this critical

position," said Commissioner Levin. "This administration is committed to working in partnership with our municipalities and counties, and Abe will play a major role in that effort."

Antun, a member of the Association of New Jersey Hispanic Officials, has served as Hudson County Administrator since 1998 and has held the positions of Director of Finance and Administration and Treasurer since 1988. In those posts, he has been responsible for the fiscal and

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Abraham Antun

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Grant to Aid Rape Victims

DCA has announced the awarding of a \$87,550 grant to a Cape May County agency that provides support and advocacy services to women who have experienced sexual violence.

The DCA grant will support the work of the Coalition Against Rape and Abuse, based in Cape May County Court House. Services include counseling the victims of sexual violence and their families, staffing a crisis intervention hotline and conducting educational programs for middle and high school students about teen dating and violence prevention.

The grant comes from DCA's Division on Women through a program that provides funding for rape crisis centers in each of New Jersey's 21 counties.

New Brunswick Has HOPE

New Brunswick had a double HOPE VI ceremony this month, cutting a ribbon for the first completed homes of a new development while breaking ground for the next units.

"The New Brunswick HOPE VI project aims to bring new life to this neighborhood," said DCA Commissioner Susan Bass Levin. "We celebrate both the beginning and the end result of new housing in New Brunswick."

Phase I of the project consists of 68 public and affordable rental housing units at the corner of George Street and Remsen Avenue. The units include one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom apartments in 16 buildings. All of the units will be affordable to families earning less than 60 percent of the area median income. Monthly rents will range from \$176 to \$1,108. Funding for the initiative included federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits from the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency.

Internet Use

DCA has recently purchased and installed sophisticated Internet monitoring software that permits the tracking of Internet sites visited and time spent surfing the Internet.

Employees are again cautioned that Internet access is not free and is provided for business purposes.

Please ensure your use of the Internet is in accordance with both state and DCA policies covering this area.

Furlough Offered

The state's Voluntary Furlough Program allows employees to take up to 30 days off from work without pay in a calendar year without adversely affecting the accrual of leave time, seniority or anniversary date. Extensions of up to 60 days may be requested.

Participation in the program requires advance supervisory approval.



'Harriet Tubman' Visits DCA for Black History Month

The Underground Railroad made a stop at DCA's Black History Month celebration and dropped off Harriet Tubman for a visit.

Historic re-enactor Denise Wooten Troutman brought the famed "conductor" of the Underground Railroad to life with a riveting portrayal before some 50 DCA employees.

"I feel that it's a show that should be shown everywhere," said **Xavier McLean**, a computer technician for the Neighborhood Preservation Program. "Seeing it in person really brought it home for me."

Troutman's performance was one of several highlights of the celebration organized by DCA's Affirmative Action Office and Human Relations Commission.

The audience also enjoyed the singing of **Audrey Hopkins**, a program development specialist in the Division of Housing, who discussed the origins of Negro spirituals before her rendition of "Steal Away to Jesus."

Reverend Terrell Person, pastor of the Jacobs Chapel in Mount Laurel, gave a presentation about his church, one of the oldest black congregations in New Jersey, and once one of the Underground Railroad safe houses that gave shelter to fugitive slaves.

Reverend Person also told of the history of the Still family, a prominent, South Jersey African-American family of which he is a descendent, whose ranks included Dr. James Still, a self-taught physician in the mid-1800s known as the "Black Doctor of the Pines."

The first floor conference room that held the event was transformed into a museum of African-American heritage for the day, thanks to **Clarice Sabree-Sylla**. Clarice, of the Office of Low-Income Energy Conservation, has amassed a large collection of artifacts, art and educational displays celebrating the history and contributions of African-Americans.

"I think it's important to take the time to reflect on the contributions of all the different people in our country," DCA Commissioner Susan Bass Levin said at the start of the program. "Hopefully we'll get to the point when it's not just one day or one week or a month, but all the time."

Commissioner Levin added that there is talk in the New Jersey Department of State about organizing a statewide, Underground Railroad Trail to highlight New Jersey's role in helping slaves escape from bondage.

Deirdre L. Webster Cobb, DCA's Affirmative Action Officer, extended special thanks to the members of African-American History Month Committee for their efforts in organizing the event. Serving on the committee were **Sunita Hayban**, **Maria Miranda-Tolleris**, **Elvira Nocito** and **Fred Shaw**.



Commissioner Susan Bass Levin welcomes participants to DCA's Black History Month celebration.

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Editorial Staff: Tom Damm, John Patella and E.J. Miranda

Graphics: Melissa R. Young

The New York Times, Record Profile Commissioner

Two of the region's major newspapers have written feature stories on Susan Bass Levin as DCA's new commissioner.

The New York Times profiled the commissioner in its Sunday edition on February 17, two weeks after *The Record* of Hackensack introduced readers to DCA's new leader.

Copies of the articles are available in the Communications Office on the 8th Floor.

In *The New York Times* piece, Commissioner Levin spoke about the diverse responsibilities of the department.

"The person who runs DCA has a lot of constituencies," Levin said. "But DCA constituencies for the most part are the underhoused, the underutilized and the under-listened-to in the state. While it has given grants to most every municipality in the state for one reason or another, its major emphasis is in the cities, and New Jersey's beleaguered cities have long needed advocacy."

Commissioner Levin told the paper that in helping the cities, the state has to be creative in difficult budget times.

"We make our cities stronger, we make every town in New Jersey stronger," she said. "We have to think about new ways to do things and make things happen. It is easier when there is a lot of money, but when there isn't, we have to be creative."

"People throw up their hands when it comes to cities, but you don't solve anything that way. Like they say, you have to take back our cities street by street. You have to have confidence it will work."

Camden will be one of the first priorities.

"Camden is bleeding, and we as a state have to deal with that," she said.

Commissioner Levin told *The New York Times* that she will miss being mayor, "but there is a time to move on. I used to be the one complaining about how things were done in Trenton. Now I have a chance to make things change for the better."

Latino Leaders Welcome Levin Era at DCA

Leaders of New Jersey's Latino community had a message of welcome for the new administration at a recent reception in Trenton organized by DCA's Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development.

While fast-breaking events in the New Jersey Legislature prevented Commissioner Susan Bass Levin from attending, it did not dampen the enthusiasm many expressed for the administration of Gov. James E. McGreevey and the Levin era at DCA.

"If anytime we had an opportunity for the Latino community to make an impact in public policy and the leadership in our state, this is the time," said Gloria Bonilla-Santiago, director of the Center for Strategic Urban Community Leadership at Rutgers-Camden.

DCA Chief of Staff **Marge DellaVecchia** told the audience of approximately 75 people about what they can expect from the department's new commissioner.

"I have been by her side on many occasions and I will tell you, I am so happy for me, I am happy for you, I am happy for the state. I'm particularly happy for the Center because she is a committed, loyal, enthusiastic, hardworking, dedicated public servant who only believes in doing the hard work and getting it done," DellaVecchia said. "You can rest assured, Commissioner Levin will be a good friend to this community," she added.

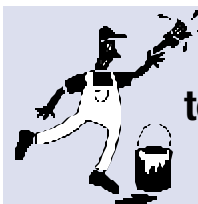
The Center, which has been in existence for some 27 years, is now entering a new period of maturity, said its Executive Director **Angie Armand**. "Today we celebrate the beginning of the adult years of the Center," Angie said. "These upcoming years are those which will strengthen the Center's character, its foundation, and more importantly solidify its past to a journey of empowering all Latinos of this state."



Center for Hispanic Policy Research and Development Executive Director Angie Armand (center) stands with DCA Chief of Staff Marge DellaVecchia and New Brunswick Tomorrow Executive Director Jeffrey Vega at a reception at NJN Studios in Trenton.

Building Hours

The DCA building will be open until 7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The change in hours starts immediately.



Governor to Tape Housing, Lead PSAs

Gov. James E. McGreevey will record Public Service Announcements on housing discrimination and lead safety.

Both television spots are funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through DCA as part of separate outreach programs.

One PSA warns of the potential dangers of lead based paint and offers contact numbers at DCA for further information on lead safe practices. The second spot reminds viewers that housing discrimination is illegal and provides a toll free number to obtain information on housing rights.

Volunteers Needed

In the aftermath of September 11, DCA has revised its evacuation plan.

The department still needs volunteers on all floors to serve on the evacuation team. If you wish to volunteer, please e-mail Jim Telford, evacuation coordinator, at jtelford@dca.state.nj.us.

Thank you for your consideration.



Antun...continued

administrative affairs of the county. Antun has also served in top financial positions in the Borough of Madison and Union City.

"I look forward to assisting DCA in responding to the needs of our communities," said Antun. "I am ready to help Governor McGreevey and Commissioner Levin make a positive difference in our state."

Antun, who is certified as a municipal finance officer, a municipal tax collector and a county finance officer, holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and economics from Saint Peter's College and a master's degree in business administration, with a concentration in finance, from Seton Hall University.

From 1989 to 1996, Antun served as an instructor for Rutgers University, preparing county and municipal employees to become certified municipal finance officers.

In 1994-95, the New Jersey Association of County Finance Officers named Antun "Financial Officer of the Year" for his contributions in the field of government finance.



Community Building News

Kudos

Special thanks from Jay Bender, Fire Marshal from the Borough of Fair Lawn, to **Heather Puskar** and **Ron Svrcek** for their patience and professional assistance recently while setting up a NFIRS computer system.

DCA Nursery: Who Was That Cutie Pie???

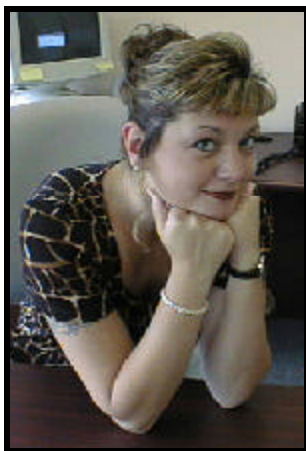


If you guessed **Jackie Welsh**, you were right.

Jackie has worked for DCA since 1987. She began working in the cooperative education program and became permanent after graduation. She has worked for the Personnel Officer of Human Resources, the Director of Human Resources, and the Director of Housing and Community Resources. Jackie is currently working under the direction of the Director's Executive Assistant as the Training Coordinator for DCA.

Jackie is currently enrolled in Mercer County Community College pursuing an Associate's degree in Applied Science in Office Systems Technology.

She is currently engaged and planning a November 2002 wedding at Sayen House and Gardens. Jackie's daughter Stephanie is eight-years old.



Upcoming Events

- | | |
|----------|---|
| March 12 | PC Users' Group Meeting Continuing with Outlook, 2:30 p.m., Room 521 |
| March 19 | Professional Development Training Series Motivating Others, 2:00 p.m., Room 521, Room 621 - 2:30 p.m. |

Work-Related Injuries

If you incur a work-related injury, DCA's Office of Human Resources reminds you to adhere to the following procedures:

Notify **Betty Anne LaMendola** or **Mary Ann Vogel** in the Office of Human Resources at (609) 984-0102 or (609) 292-6021 within 24 hours of the injury or onset of the illness to discuss the problem.

If the problem appears to be job-related, Human Resources will designate an authorized treating physician. The employee cannot select a physician unless approved by Human Resources. The "Employer's First Report of Accidental Injury or Occupational Disease" form must then be completed and submitted to Human Resources. In the event the employee is unable to complete the accident report, it will be the responsibility of the supervisor to do so.

In life threatening or serious situations, an employee may receive immediate medical attention without prior approval, but must notify his or her supervisor immediately (or as soon as the condition is stabilized). Human Resources must approve any follow-up treatment.

Except for emergency treatment or diagnosis, DCA will assume no financial liability for services rendered by a physician unauthorized by DCA.

A doctor's note is needed for all job-related illnesses and/or injuries. The note must include the diagnosis, prognosis, method of treatment and anticipated return to work date.

Sick Leave Injury (SLI) provides for an employee to be out of work without using sick, vacation, or administrative leave days. A request for SLI must be submitted to Human Resources within five days of an accident or illness. Human Resources staff will review and evaluate the request. If approved, the request is submitted to the Department of Personnel for final approval. If denied, the employee will be notified of the reason for the denial. (An employee may appeal this decision).

Until SLI is approved, an employee must record all absences by utilizing his or her benefit time to remain on the payroll. After approval, time used will be restored. This includes hours used for physical therapy, when necessary.

Failure to follow these procedures may result in the denial of SLI and/or Worker's Compensation benefits.

Accident report forms and SLI forms are available in the Office of Human Resources. For further information, call Human Resources at (609) 984-0102.

Lunchtime Information Sessions

12:00 to 1:00 p.m.

Conference Room 129, (unless otherwise noted)

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|---------|---|
| April 2 | Gardening Techniques - Limited Space/ Container Gardening |
| May 14 | Car Repairs - For the Mechanically Challenged |
| June 11 | Flea Marketing - Treasure/Value Hunting |
| July 2 | Quilting |
| Aug. 6 | Relaxation Techniques - Yoga - Meditation - Reflexology |
| Sept. 3 | Simplifying your Holidays |
| Oct. 1 | Financial Planning |
| Nov. 12 | Preparing Wills and Living Wills/Advanced Directives |
| Dec. 3 | Healthy and Quick Meals |

Resource/Learning Lab

The Division of Housing and Community Resources established the Resource/Learning Lab during the spring of 2001. The Lab features a variety of training and reference materials and offers one-on-one, group, and self-paced learning programs.

Many of you are already taking advantage of the Lab's equipment (laptop computers, projectors, VCR, and TV monitor) that is available for your meetings and program presentations. The Lab also sponsors the PC Users' Group meetings as well as the Professional Development Training series.

If you have any questions about the Resource/Learning Lab, please contact **Pat Fowler** at 609-341-3274 or via email at rllab@dca.state.nj.us or pfowler@dca.state.nj.us.